

OUR VOICE

Seemingly, President George W. Bush's invocation about terrorism will end up being a self-fulfilling prophecy. The preliminary reports from the National Commission on the terrorist attacks against the United States, or the September 11 Commission, just came out. These reports told us that Saddam Hussein's deposed government and Osama Bin Laden's Al Qaeda did not collaborate in planning or executing the September 11 attacks, as the Bush administration had argued to justify the military offensive in Iraq. Among other things, the commission also found that the U.S. security system seriously failed not only in not predicting the danger, but in formulating a response to defend the country.

In an attempt to exert damage control as soon as possible, the same day that some extracts from this report were announced, June 17, President Bush stated that the relationship did exist, but this time, he did not elaborate on the original, main argument that he and his main collaborators had made that Baghdad had been behind the attacks, demonstrating the extreme dangerousness of the Hussein regime for U.S. national security.

This report critically sketches at least two extremely grave problems. The first is that the U.S. government may have deliberately decided to exaggerate—not without an air of conspiracy—the degree of danger faced at that time and now, to “convince” the public and the U.S. and world political class that it was necessary to respond with acts of war and depose the Iraqi president, an argument the administration defends even now, albeit with certain subtle differences. The second problem is the fragility of U.S. security systems when facing the terror in September 2001. If the first were confirmed, we would be facing an institutional crisis that would probably turn into a crisis of credibility for the Bush administration, with the attending risks to his aspirations for re-election.

It would also mean a return to unhappy times for Americans: I am referring to the times in which President Richard Nixon used any means, both licit and illicit, to achieve his political ambitions, until he had to resign because of the Watergate scandal. This, in and of itself, represents a credibility risk that could have an impact on the United States unlike anything since the Vietnam War. On the other hand, it is no less important to point out that the facts revealed by the commission once again demonstrate the flimsy basis upon which Washington mounted what could be considered an underhanded stratagem against Iraq using the United Nations and many other bilateral and multilateral fronts. All of this put international security even more at risk and injures the legitimacy of its rickety institutional structure (mainly the UN), which so urgently needs reforming. Simultaneously, it once again dangerously weakened Washington's international relations with the world and its role as the self-styled central actor in reorganizing international governance, today so prey to greater, alarming vacuums of power: the great power in its labyrinth.

Given the imminent release of the complete report, the insistence of President Bush, Vice President Richard Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld on maintaining their initial argument about the criminal association between Hussein and Bin Laden will be more of an obstacle than a political advantage. It should be understood, in any case, as an immediate way to gain the most time possible, before thinking of a way out that would eliminate the risk of losing more points than those already lost in the opinion polls. Given the new circumstances, that seems very unlikely.

The U.S. government is at a crossroads during this election period: on the one hand, it can accept that the extremist foreign policy and defense strategy forged by Paul Wolfowitz and Donald Rumsfeld is beginning to be seriously affected and try to reorient it completely, which could imply admitting that they had lied and resorted to the deliberate and wrong (and, in the history of their foreign policy, failed) “construction” of the enemy in order to justify its destruction. Alternatively, it can continue in the same vein—which seems to be the decision the White House has already made—and maintain the initial argument about

the fight against terrorism, flying in the face of all logic and political legitimacy, facing the government off against different sectors of power and, in passing, wasting time in the effort to achieve a coherent solution to the world's problems. This last option of the war against terrorism not only could represent the end of President Bush's administration, but it could also repeat the past in its worst form and take the United States once again into the era of angst as the worst scenarios of Bush's prophetic invocation about terrorism since September 11 come true.

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There is no doubt that the "war on terrorism," now starting to be questioned even by political actors who previously supported it unconditionally in the United States itself, and the upcoming events in the Iraq war will be decisive for the next presidential elections. As never before, foreign policy issues will have an influence on voters' preferences. We have included three articles in our "United States Affairs" section that look at different aspects of the U.S. elections from a Mexican perspective. Paz Consuelo Márquez Padilla establishes the enormous importance of the election outcome for the world, warning us of the imminent danger that the U.S. neo-conservatism, a defender of unilateral U.S. neo-imperialism will finish sinking its roots in the political system with such force that it will be almost impossible to return to more liberal times if Bush wins. Cristina Rosas, for her part, looks at the elections through the prism of a detailed analysis of the ideologies behind the newest U.S. foreign policy strategies, which justify the war in Iraq as a moral obligation of the United States to save the world from terrorism, and makes it valid to even use so-called "preventive war." Graciela Orozco and Celina Bárcenas have contributed an article with very recent information about the growing influence of Latino voters in U.S. elections, something that has prompted both parties to expend more efforts and spend more money on their campaigns in this community. The section concludes with a contribution from Zuo Xiaoyuan, who analyzes the surprising similarities in U.S. and Chinese government policies to reduce regional differences in development.

The coming election will be determinant in many ways, so much so that it may define the future not only of the United States but of specific regions. In our "North American Affairs" section, we have included two articles dealing with the process of regional integration. We begin with an evocative text by Silvia Núñez about the viability of moving toward a community of North America, surpassing the trade integration brought by the North American Free Trade Agreement. Núñez says this is possible if society and institutions develop an attitude favorable to building consensuses that transcend particular interests. For Ismael Aguilar Barajas, far from an integration that points toward a community, one of whose essential traits would be the gradual opening of borders, the events of September 11 have prompted those in charge of national security to reinforce borders. In the same context of the integration of North America, in our "Canadian Issues" section, Alfonso de María y Campos, Alberto Garza and Mayomi Cid have presented us with a very complete evaluation of Mexican-Canadian relations on the sixtieth anniversary of their establishment. They conclude that positive collaboration and mutual support have overwhelmingly predominated in this case.

According to several recent polls, lack of public safety, today considered by the public to be Mexico's main problem, is inextricably linked to impunity, a phenomenon propitiated by the country's inefficient criminal justice system. For our "Politics" section, we asked specialist Miguel Carbonell to give our readers a panorama of Mexico's justice system and a commentary about recent reform proposals. In the same section, we include an article by political analyst Tania Hernández about the internal strife among the different factions of the governing National Action Party vis-à-vis the 2006 presidential elections.

Fox has often been criticized for a dearth of public policies. In "Society", Gustavo Leal brings us a severe critique of health policies and strategies —among them the new "popular" health insurance— which have not solved the system's inability to prevent and treat disease. Berenice Ramírez, for her part, has presented us with an interesting analysis of the crisis of Mexico's social security system. According to the state, it is caused by excessive pension payments, while the author maintains that it is due to the irresponsible pri-

vativation of pension funds. This section concludes with an interesting article about the community radio in Huayacocotla, Veracruz, an indigenous community. Author Zaidee Stavely explains the importance of alternative communication in a world increasingly coopted by media monopolies.

In our "Economy" section, energy expert Sergio Benito Osorio offers a penetrating analysis of the multiple services contracts issued by the country's government oil giant Petróleos Mexicanos (Pemex). These contracts have been created by the state to allocate large tracts of land to foreign companies for exploring, drilling and processing natural gas, something which not only is a violation of the Constitution, but is not in Mexico's strategic or commercial interests.

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"Powerful art of massive dimensions, violent colors and expressive force capable of shaking up the most diverse aesthetic opinions." This is how René Avilés Fabila describes the work of Sebastián, a Mexican sculptor who has spent more than 30 years enriching the panorama of modern sculpture. On the occasion of his exposition "Emotional Geometry" at the Old San Ildefonso College, Vincenzo Sanfo opens a window briefly illustrating Sebastian's visual and conceptual alternative for sculpture and art in general in our "Art and Culture" section. Then Rebeca Maldonado presents the work by talented, young Mexican visual artist María Tello, recognized in national art circles for her original proposal, based on a specific search for the essence of objects, an attempt to strip naked the simple things of daily life to reveal them with that other gaze that can only be offered by someone who has a profound philosophical vision.

"The Splendor of Mexico" takes us on this occasion to Tamaulipas, in the extreme northeast of the country, whose history goes back millions of years. Marisol Montellano looks at the details of its geological past and the fossil wealth distributed in a large part of the state. Gustavo Ramírez takes us along the roads of its pre-Hispanic history, including the development of different civilizations in a very bio-diverse land: semi-desert, forest and jungle. Lastly, Carlos Rugeiro tells us the history of Guerrero Viejo, a town that disappeared under the reservoir of the International Falcon Dam, emerging years later to show the ruins of its splendid past.

In "Museums" we feature the Huastec Culture Museum, part of the modern Metropolitan Space Cultural Complex, inaugurated recently in the city of Tampico. The museum aims to recuperate the ancient Huastec culture, showing through its creations, traditions and customs that its roots are still alive in our day. Finishing up the contributions about this beautiful region, the "Ecology" section includes an article about one of Mexico's most important biosphere reserves, rich in biodiversity: El Cielo. With four ecosystems that produce three distinct climates, rich in native fauna and flora, this reserve is the patrimony of humanity. The section concludes with an article by Edit Antal about the thorny question of transgenic maize imports: here positions in Mexico and the United States are diametrically opposed since one society values the cultural content of these crops, while the other measures them only in terms of profitability.

The recent death of one of the most renowned and original dramatists of the Mexican theater, Hugo Argüelles, prompted *Voices of Mexico* to pay homage to him in our "Literature" section. In addition to including a fragment of one of the works that earned him national prestige, *Los huesos del amor y de la muerte* (The Bones of Love and Death), we present a review of his life and work by director and theater critic Gonzalo Valdés Medellín.

Lastly, on this occasion, "In Memoriam" is dedicated to celebrated university professor and philosopher Leopoldo Zea. One of his most outstanding disciples, Mario Magallón explains that Zea was not only the main promoter of Latin American studies in our National University, but also the most important representative of the twentieth century's most original, critical and combative current of Latin American philosophical thought.

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde